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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAR ES SALAAM 000740

DEPT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/ITA/AF, AF/E, INR/AF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/16/2018

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [TZ](#)

SUBJECT: ZANZIBAR TOURIST SHOOTING REVEALS ISLAND RIFTS

REFS: (A) Dar es Salaam 648 (B) Dar es Salaam 444

Classified By: RSO Paul Avallone, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: After a vacationing French national was shot and critically wounded at a Zanzibar resort on September 17th, extensive follow up inquiries yielded insight into the inner workings of Zanzibar and its police. The lack of initial police response and severe deficiencies in the Zanzibari force's internal investigation and review process may indicate that the senior officer's corps, largely comprised of mainland Tanzanians, are not fully in control of their 5000 rank-and-file native Zanzibari members. Tourism is the top earner for Zanzibar, and the Embassy warned local officials that a U.S. Travel Warning would be issued if it appeared that crime against visitors was not seriously addressed. End summary.

THE CRIME

¶2. (SBU) According to police accounts, on the evening of September 17th 2008, six men, two of whom were armed with Kalashnikov rifles, entered the compound of the Crystal Resort, located some six kilometers south of the town of Paje on Zanzibar's southeast coast. Most of the resort's patrons were eating dinner at the al-fresco restaurant when the robbers struck demanding money, passports, cell phones, jewelry, laptops, and other items of value. The robbers calmly escorted guests to their bungalows for their belongings over a considerable period of time (one account suggests the robbery took place over a thirty-minute period). One of the victims, a French national, resisted by shoving a robber as he was rifling his pockets. One suspect fired a single round at the victim's feet; the bullet struck the tiled concrete floor and ricocheted into the victim's abdomen. At that moment, the robbers hastily finished gathering the stolen items and fled the compound in at least one vehicle. The gunshot victim was severely wounded.

¶3. (SBU) As the crime was in progress, an unidentified male foreigner (whose identity is known to investigators) escaped from the resort and drove to the Paje police station, which is situated at the entrance to the town on the main east-west road between Paje and Zanzibar's main city of Stone Town. The foreigner entered the police station and told the two officers on duty that the robbery was taking place. He beseeched the police to get their firearms and offered to drive them to the resort. The police refused, saying that they were unable to respond as they were "out of ammunition." The foreigner pleaded for a few minutes before leaving

in disgust and returning to the resort. By that time, the incident was over; the wounded Frenchman was driven by private car to the Zanzibar airport and flown to Dar es Salaam to be stabilized before returning to France for further treatment.

EMBASSY ACTION

¶4. (C) Despite regular Embassy contact with security and government officials on Zanzibar, first word of the incident only came to the Embassy weeks later, via a lawyer for the resort who sent a letter of complaint to Ambassador Green and five European Ambassadors. Afterward, RSO met with local and national security officials, Consul liaised with relevant counterparts, and Consul and Zanzibar Affairs Officer (ZAO) demarched the Zanzibar Government Ministry of Trade and Tourism as well as the Ministry of Good Government, and both ministries were well-briefed on the incident and both claimed to be pushing for reforms. (Comment: Although Zanzibar conducts many of its own affairs, law enforcement is a national competency, not a Zanzibari regional one. Nonetheless, the local "Ministries" of Good Government, and, to a lesser extent, Tourism are considered to be the Regional Government's back-channel on Union Security issues. Riding herd over all is "Chief Minister" Shamsi Nahodha, who declined to be demarched on the incident, claiming that ZAO first needed to send a diplomatic note to the MFA prior to seeking an appointment with him. End Comment)

¶5. (U) In the demarche to the Ministry of Tourism, Consul made the point that if we recognized a pattern wherein crime against foreigners was increasing and moreover that U.S. travelers could not expect police response, we were legally and morally obligated to warn our citizens. Consul noted that a travel warning about Zanzibar/Tanzania would have a significant, negative impact on tourism, the key industry of the island.

¶6. (C) Zanzibari officials said that even before the incident, barracks were planned and the number of officers increased for the Paje police station as part of island-wide improvement of police presence in tourist areas. New posts were already completed in the north (home to the most upscale resorts). Resorts were also encouraged to offer vacant rooms for on-duty policemen. Additionally, one official claimed that military intelligence officers were used in the follow-up investigation, something rarely done and "perhaps against the rules." Along the coast in the area of the crime, police and soldiers swept house-to-house from Makunduchi to Paje, and tourism officials claimed that those found to be not from the area and without a job were arrested for vagrancy. Hoteliers were also encouraged to maintain on premises security guards.

¶7. (C) The French Embassy sent a note verbale to the MFA but was not expecting a response given that it was still awaiting a response to a similar note on a different incident several months ago. French Ambassador de Labriolle also made a demarche to the Zanzibari Ministry of Tourism, coordinated with our own. The Ambassador said he asked Paris to include more forceful language in its information on Tanzania saying that police and medical services are not comparable to European standards.

POLICE FOLLOW-UP

¶8. (C) RSO met with a senior Zanzibari police official responsible for the investigation of this incident to press for details. According to the official, a team of inspectors was dispatched to the Paje police station to determine why the officers had failed to act. The inspectors took testimony from the officers on duty at the time, who stated that they refused to respond because they had not been issued ammunition. The

inspectors then conducted a search of the premises and found the standard issue number of loaded rifle and pistol magazines hidden separately from the station's assigned firearms. The inspectors referred their findings in a formal report to the Zanzibar Police "court martial" (note: the official explained that the body is more of an administrative punishment "committee" than a military court martial; hereinafter "the committee").

¶9. (C) After the RSO asked the official what the expected punishment would be, he was careful to first explain that the officers' lack of action was "entirely unacceptable and embarrassing." He added that the officers had received "military training" to deal with this sort of crime "very harshly" and that the only possible explanation as to why they refused to act was that they were afraid. The RSO posited that corruption could be a factor, which the official dismissed as highly unlikely, as the investigators looked into that possibility and found no supporting evidence.

¶10. (C) Turning to the prospect of punishment for the officers involved, the RSO asked what the committee might recommend. The official stated flatly "nothing, or very little anyway," explaining that the committee's members are drawn entirely from the Zanzibari majority of the force (note: to provide the RSO context, the official explained that ninety percent of the Zanzibari police force is comprised of officers born there, the remaining ten percent are from Tanzania's mainland and comprise the bulk of the command and investigative staff above the rank of major), and are therefore traditionally lenient in making admonishment recommendations to the Zanzibar Police Commissioner.

The official further stated that the Commissioner, for his part, is very reluctant to overturn the committee's findings for fear of inciting the Zanzibari cohort of the rank and file police. "The officers under investigation are Zanzibari Muslims, so we don't expect much, but we'll see."

¶11. (C) The official provided background into the investigation's progress. After handing a worn mugshot photograph (in which the person in the image is holding a placard with "Abdullah Hassan" handwritten on it), the official explained that the photo was taken when the "main suspect" had been arrested a few weeks prior for another armed robbery. In that case, a man armed with Kalashnikov rifle stole a substantial number of pre-paid cell phone cards from "an Arab" in Stone Town. A few days later, an informant provided an address where someone had been selling cards at a discount. The police conducted a raid, and found the suspect with a number of the cards and 5 million Tanzanian shillings in his possession. The serial numbers on the cards matched those that had been stolen, and later the victim identified "Abdullah Hassan" as the robber. The suspect was remanded to the Zanzibari prison, the money and evidence impounded, and the case referred to the criminal court. According to the official "our case was closed."

¶12. (C) A few weeks later, the Zanzibar Criminal Court threw out the case for "lack of evidence." According to the official, the suspect's accomplices had successfully intimidated the victim to the point where he would not testify in a preliminary hearing. (Source comment: "The criminal court here (in Zanzibar) is weak and corrupt. It is very hard for us to get convictions here for anything, so we were not really surprised.") After his release, "Abdullah Hassan" successfully petitioned the court to order the return of the impounded 5 million shillings, and had scheduled an appointment with the police to sign for it the day after the Crystal Resort shooting. When he failed to show up at the appointed hour, he became a stronger suspect. Investigators

showed a photograph to the first victim of the night, the Crystal Resort gate security guard, who identified "Abdullah Hassan" as his assailant; other victims did likewise. Based on that evidence, the police issued an arrest warrant. (Note: just hours after this meeting, the official called the RSO to report that the suspect had been apprehended in Bagamoyo, on mainland Tanzania, and was under interrogation).

RSO COMMENT

¶13. (C) RSO comment: Crimes against tourists, especially in the southeast part of Zanzibar and in the capital Stonetown are not infrequent, but rarely involve firearms. The Crystal Resort shooting is especially worrying in that police clearly failed to respond as the robbery occurred, were negligent in failing to provide assistance to the victims, and failed to inform us in the first instance, even when asked point-blank about recent crimes against foreigners. In fact, only the investigative follow up seems to have been reasonably well-executed. If the Zanzibari police tolerate such nonchalance, or worse -- cowardice -- among their first-responders, more incidents of this sort can be expected.

¶14. (C) RSO comment continued: Judging by the Commissioner's deference to the Zanzibari-controlled review committee's apparently lenient findings, it seems there could be a significant rift between the Zanzibari officers and their mainlander commanders, quite possibly with political undertones. At a minimum, one gets the impression that there is a good deal of unease between the two factions, and that the police commanders might not have the full loyalty of their officers when it counts. This bears careful monitoring in the run-up to the 2010 general election.

GREEN